

## POULTRY DEPARTMENT.

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## About Those Unwelcome Tenants.

In our climate, where there is so little really cold weather, we must look out for these tenants all the year around.

A correspondent of Poultry writes an amusing account of her experience, but with all the humor there is much of truth that brings up personal trials of every poultry keeper:

The immortal David Harum assures us that a few fleas are good for a dog and I readily agree with him, particularly as regards the few and the fewer the better. Just so with hen mites and lice a few may be beneficial but the conscientious breeder need not lie awake nights worrying for fear his poultry will be neglected in this respect. The thing to worry about will be how to keep them few enough.

When we first became interested in the creatures that wear feathers—of their own—we believed and approved those people who gravely told us they had never had a louse or a mite on their premises but alas, if "simple faith is more than Norman blood" as the poet tells us our score card has depreciated sadly with time and a full knowledge. Our faith has vanished and when anyone tells us the like now, we know that they are not wilfully deceiving us, but trying to. Vermin is just as natural to chickens as graft to corporations.

Very early in my housekeeping I had an experience with those pernicious little tenants which pay no lodging and heed no writs of ejectment from any court, and I appealed to an old French woman for advice in the matter. The following dialogue followed:

"You can read." "Yes."

"More as Englees?" "No."

"Dat is ver' bad. You shall read ever ting you find about de boog. You shall ask everybody you know and you shall do all what you read and all what somebody tell you and shall do dem all ever day for seex months and then you have no more boog till next year."

It was not very encouraging but it is about the plan of procedure to be followed by any one who wishes to be free from objectionable company.

Whitewash and plenty of it is about as necessary as the desire to get rid of all the vermin. Whitewash, plain and unadorned is good, but trimmed with the rich and unmistakable perfume of carbolic acid is better. This is one time and place when a liberal use of odor is not vulgar.

But one cannot wander all the time with whitewash pail in hand and every sparrow that alights in your yard brings a fresh supply of immigrants, so daily or at most, weekly methods of extermination must be pursued.

Twice in a season is plenty often enough for the whitewashing if in the intervals of whitewashing you go over the brood coops, perches and dropping boards thoroughly, particularly on the underside and in all crevices with kerosene, either with or without the addition of carbolic acid. I have found a large machine oil can to be as good or better than any sprayer. There are plenty of good liquid lice killers but kerosene has the advantage of being always on hand, whereas the patent dopes are apt to be forgotten from time to time.

If the mites are too bad, it is a very good plan to burn the oil off with a long handled torch, but first provide yourself with a couple of pails of water and a large dipper lest you demonstrate "how great a matter a little fire kindleth."

All due regard to the time honored custom of straw nests, as a breeder of vermin and harbor for the same they cannot be excelled.

We make our nests wholly of air-slacked lime, about three or four inches of this in a box makes a clean and soft warm nest, one which hens like and which harbors no intruders. We used to put in a couple of inches of lime and straw on that but the hens scratched the straw out so persistently that we increased the quantity of lime and let it go at that. Of course you have a dust bath of some sort, ashes, road-dust or a spaded corner of the run, liberally sprinkled wherever it is, with lime, sulphur, carbolic acid or some similar flavor, but let me tell you in all seriousness after years of experience, I have found nothing in the way of a dusting place that suits any hen, patrician blue-blood or ordinary mongrel scrub, like a well-cared-for flower bed, the choicer the flowers the better and all the green stuff you can carry, wheel, haul, lug or tote will not suit her half so well as your earliest cabbage and beets which she can sneak for herself.

## How to Learn to Feed in the Natural Way.

Fowls that have a good range and feed themselves are seldom sick. Therefore it is desirable to approach as near to the natural method of feeding as possible. Farm Poultry publishes a long article on the subject which is full of information:

To acquire skill in feeding fowls one must practice feeding, closely observe results, and use his judgment. Suppose I tell a boy that to project a ball through the air for a given distance a certain amount of energy must be applied, and applied in such a way that the ball, moving with the velocity given it, must describe a certain arc as it moves through the air. A scientist who perhaps could not throw a ball within two rods of the spot he desired it to reach might have figured out all about energy, velocity, etc., applying it to the movement of the ball; but what good would it do to tell all this to the boy? And what boy in his senses would think of going out to play ball, and, as he prepared for the first throw, stopping to say to himself, "I must put into this throw just so much strength, and the ball must leave my hand at just such an elevation?" No, the boy takes the ball and throws it at the point he wishes it to reach. The accuracy of his aim depends mostly on his previous experience and skill in that line. If he misses, he tries again, and without being conscious of its efforts, his mind too works all the time, comparing each throw with others, and estimating differences and gradually bringing the muscles under control so that before long the boy is sending the ball to the mark every time, and he may acquire marvelous control of the ball, not only in accurate throwing and in speed, but throwing it so that its path shall be eccentric, or its speed changed in seeming defiance of nature's laws as it flies through the air. And all this he does without either knowledge or caring anything about the scientific expressions of the various features of his performance. There is practically no limit to the number of illustrations that might be made on this point. Every line of work and every sport abounds in them.

When men work with machines, or with problems in which all necessary qualities and conditions are known, they may be guided more by set laws and rules, but even in such cases experience and trained judgment and skill are essential to superior work. In handling live stock, it is impossible to follow arbitrary rules and get the results the rules anticipate with the uniformity that would justify such use of rules. The poultry feeder has to learn by experiment and observation how much to feed and when and how to vary his rations.

Nothing Hard About it.—From what has been said of the composition of the common grain foods, and of the functions of appetite and the capacity of the system of the fowl to adapt

the food given it to its requirements, the reader may see that experiment and observation on poultry feeding do not necessarily mean intricate and puzzling processes. On the contrary they are simple and easy, requiring only very ordinary attention, just such attention in fact as must be given to any process or work requiring some exercise of judgment.

The greatest obstacle to learning to feed poultry well is that so many amateurs are wholly self trained, and are taught through books and papers, and such teaching and training cannot be anything like as effective as personal instruction. In addition to this the poultry keeper who begins in mature life to learn poultry keeping, and who is trying to learn and to make it pay at the same time, feels the effect of his errors and inefficiency much more than one who learns while working for someone else. That is one reason why I always urge people going into poultry keeping to begin in a small way and to increase very slowly. It takes time to acquire skill in feeding, and it is terribly expensive to practice on large stocks of fowls.

Another thing to consider is that the results of feeding are sometimes dependent upon or affected by circumstances which the novice either fails to see as in any way related to the feeding problem—or does not see in their true relation to it. Not infrequently the methods he adopts make good feeding difficult, and sometimes some little peculiarity in a person's way of managing his fowls will, when discovered, account to the experienced adviser for continued poor results. Such peculiarities and trifling errors are very hard to locate through correspondence.

Leave Out "Original" Ideas.—In general I think that a large part of the difficulties of amateur feeders may be traced to some "original" ideas or combinations of methods that they have introduced into their poultry keeping. To me the easy assurance with which novices in poultry keeping go about the improvement of methods recommended by experienced poultry keepers is a never ending puzzle. How few of them are willing to take simple instructions and follow them to the letter!

Still, to be fair to the novice, I must admit that a good deal of what is written for him about poultry keeping only adds to his confusion, and as those who know the least about it are usually the most positive in assurances of good results if their instructions are followed, and therefore seem to him the best instructors, he is very apt to prefer the less reliable instructors and instruction at first.

If a novice in feeding, (and by novice, in this connection, I mean any one who has not acquired a fair skill in feeding), will follow the method used by any successful poultryman right through, he will generally be getting fair results within a short time. It may be—and often is the case—that there are poor features, or unnecessary features in the methods of the more expert poultryman. As to this, the novice should not attempt to judge, or if he forms an opinion, should not make it the reason for a departure from the method, but should learn from some one of more experience whether the change he contemplates would work well.

Having adopted general methods of caring for fowls and of feeding which have given much satisfaction to some others that we may call them "tested" methods, the novice should direct all the attention he gives feeding to making a success of feeding by that method.

Let him remember that whatever method he may try will give him the results he seeks only in proportion to the skill he acquires in using it. There are many good methods—many tested methods of feeding, but his skill is as yet undeveloped and his capacity untested. If he changes methods he simply begins over again, and many a time when success comes by some method of feeding adopted



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after a brief trial and rejection of several others, that success is not due to that particular method of feeding alone, but is the result of the whole experience acquired, and would almost certainly have been attained sooner by persistence in the first method adopted.

"Practice Makes Perfect."—Take any good method (there are many of them) and learn to use it. As far as the instructions given are definite, try to follow them to the letter. Where they tell you to use your judgment, but give as they usually do, some right, begin by using these approximate statements of what should be about mate instructions and follow them until you have reason to suppose that some variation from them should be made. Then make the variation slight. For instance, in feeding fowls what is called "a full feed" of grain, the amount an average laying hen will take as an ordinary handful—not a heaping handful, but what one would grasp in the hand with the hand closed enough so that even if turned over only a few grains would fall. This is a rough way of measuring grain, but with practice many poultry men become surprisingly accurate in measuring grain out in this way as they scatter it for fowls. They know or should know how many fowls are in each flock. If they expect the grain to be eaten clean, as when fed on bare ground or very short litter, they give what they think the fowls will clean up. If they are feeding in deep litter they give more—as much more as they think necessary to let the fowls get a full feed of the grain in the time allowed. The judgment as to quantity does not have to be absolutely accurate every time, because as we saw in considering scientific balancing of food elements, the fowl could adapt them to its needs to some extent, so a fowl in good condition will not suffer if occasionally short-fed, for it has its reserves of fat to draw upon. Also the fowl occasionally over-fed is not injured by it. If the feeder "is onto his job" he quickly notes that the food is not eaten, or if it is eaten the appetite is poorer at the next meal, and he feeds short for a meal or two, or perhaps omits a meal, and the fowl is soon feeding right again.

Feeling the Way.—To go back to the novice, if feeding what he estimates to be the average amount his number of fowls should get, they are in good condition and laying well, he may reasonably conclude he is feeding about right, and keep right on giving that quantity.

If the fowls while in good condition, bright and hearty, do not lay well, the natural conclusion is that they need a little more food, and the ration should be increased. In such a case as this it is advisable to handle the fowls to ascertain just what condition they are in. If rather thin in flesh it is better to increase a little on every feed. If in pretty fair flesh it may be better to increase only on one meal each day—for if fed too heavily they may fatten instead of beginning to lay as desired.

If hens begin to show lack of appetite, and "go off their feed," the rations should be reduced, and if a mash is fed it is best to make the principal reduction in the mash, for that is the meal that they get with least effort, and exercise is one of the best restoratives of condition and appetite.

When in doubt the novice should re-read his instructions, and if he fails to find in them information that seems to suit the case, should not hesitate to ask questions. He should also try to make himself a good judge of food stuffs, for often the quantity to feed depends to some extent on the quality of the feed. Thus in feeding wheat I discovered a number